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## Handicapped students deserve equal access

Bob Neal

*University of Maine*

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# Handicapped students deserve equal access

To the editor:

What is a student to do when she or he cannot get access to equipment that must be used to obtain a degree? This problem may face quite a few handicapped students. It certainly faces Bob McPhee, a senior journalism major.

As a result of a sports accident, Bob is confined to a wheelchair; yet he wants to be a sportswriter and has done well enough in his classes that he has been appointed a co-editor of the *Maine Campus* sports section. And the *Maine Campus* is the journalism department's primary laboratory in which journalism majors learn how to operate a newspaper.

Last April, when Bob was appointed, a request was made for an elevator to the basement offices of the *Maine Campus* so Bob could get to his work. By July, a work crew was busy in Lord Hall building a ramp on which a lift was to be installed.

In August, it was learned that "someone" had ordered

the wrong elevator. But, all were assured, it would only take three weeks to get the correct elevator here and installed. On Sept. 12, we learned the correct elevator hadn't even been ordered until Aug. 30, and delivery would be four to six weeks later.

So, perhaps after October break Bob will finally be able to do the work that I, as his laboratory teacher, require him to do. Bob would not accept a standard lowered in consideration of his handicap.

But don't we owe it to him and to other handicapped students to see to it he at least has the access most of us get simply by walking down the stairs? Wasn't five months enough time for officials to see to it an elevator was installed? Are other students also denied access to work they need for their studies because "someone" failed in his or her job?

Bob Neal

Journalism teacher  
Adviser to *Maine Campus*